



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration

Northern TTAP 2026 Issue 4



NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS
TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
NORTHERN TRIBAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CO-DIRECTOR UPDATE

Northern TTAP is excited to resume the longstanding tradition of having a regional workshop leading up to the United Tribes Technical College International Powwow. This event will take place on the UTTC campus and will feature two tracks: transportation and transit. We are building the agenda around the feedback we received from our NTTAP Steering Committee by providing foundational courses that underpin the primary activities Tribal transportation programs engage in on a daily basis.

The Transportation Track will include the following topics: Tribal Transportation Program (TTP) 101, Roadway Foundations, Construction Management and Inspection, Powwow Traffic Management, and, Tribal Transportation Directors and Managers Roundtable. LeRoy Gishi, chief, Division of Transportation, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will provide a presentation and Sheldon Kipp, Supervisory Civil Engineer, Bureau of Indian Affairs Department of Transportation, will be meeting one-on-one with individual Tribal programs to review RIFDS data.

The Transit Track will feature training for Transit Managers and Passenger Assistance, Safety and Sensitivity (PASS), along with a Transit Rodeo.

The NTTAP Regional Workshop will feature a keynote welcome by James Crawford, USDOT Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs.

For more information check out www.northernttap.org

2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Signing on Local Roadways**
 - Sep 9, 2026 – Stark County Family & Ag Campus, 2680 Empire Road, Ste B, Door C, Dickinson, ND
- **NTTAP Leaders Workshop**
 - Sept 8-9, 2026 – UTTC Campus, Bismarck, ND
- **Bridge Basics: Inspection and Maintenance**
 - Sep 15, 2026 – Stark County Family & Ag Campus, 2680 Empire Road, Ste B, Door C, Dickinson, ND
- **2026 Local Road Corrugated Metal Pipe Training**
 - Sep 24, 2026 – Burleigh County, 8100 43rd Ave NE, Bismarck, ND
- **41st Annual Local Road Conference**
 - Oct 19-21, 2026 – Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD
- **LPA — Local Public Agency Certification**
 - October 7, 2026 - Sheridan, WY
- **ACPA Training: Understanding Today's Concrete Pavements**
 - October 27, 2026 - Powell, WY
 - October 28, 2026 - Sheridan, WY
- **WMTC — Wyoming Materials Technician Certification Soil & Aggregate**
 - November 18–20, 2026

If you have a training or a technical assistance request please reach out.

[Training link form](#) or contact directly:

- Montana: Matt Ulberg, matthew.ulberg@montana.edu
- Nebraska: Megan Patent Nygren, mpatentnygren2@unl.edu
- North Dakota: Ron Hall, ronald.hall@ndsu.edu
- South Dakota: Greg Vavra, gregory.vavra@sdstate.edu
- Wyoming: Khaled Ksaibati, khaled@uwyo.edu

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LearnTracks Targets Those Who Have the Drive, But Lack the Background

Workforce shortages and empty applicant pools are hitting agencies hard across the nation, within our state, and likely in your own office. Occasionally, when applications do roll in, they come from candidates with little to no prior experience, whether they are young adults starting out or veterans launching a second career. If you are seeing applicants who have the drive but lack the background, the NTTAP through Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) is here to help you get them trained and ready to succeed.

NTTAP has several options available from either in-person classes to virtual or on-demand classes to provide that training. However, today we would like to introduce “LearnTracks”.

LearnTracks is a self-paced, on demand virtual learning path. At the moment, there are 3 tracks available; Engineering Tech 1, Maintenance Tech 1 – Summer, and Maintenance Tech 1 – Winter. Each of these tracks contain a certain number of required courses and then a certain number of elected courses that are selectable by the learner from an elective course list. Each courses, 1 to 2-hours long. After successful completion of each track, the participant can print a certificate of completion. LearnTracks is available to NTTAP tribal agencies in ND, SD, MT, WY and NE at NO COST. Participants can log into their TLN accounts and register for these tracks. If you don’t have a TLN account yet, we can help you with that.

LearnTracks

The Transportation Learning Network (TLN) currently offers the LearnTrack options below.



Engineering Tech 1

Register for this course bundle to learn/review the basics for engineering techs in the industry, including plan reading, surveying, PPE, documentation, and more.

- [LearnTrack Flyer – Eng Tech 1 \(PDF, 1001 KB\)](#)
- [Course List – Eng Tech 1 \(PDF, 1276 KB\)](#)



Maintenance Tech 1 – Summer

Register for this course bundle to learn the basics for maintenance techs in the industry, including pavement preservation, tractor mower safety, roadside weeds, and more.

- [LearnTrack Flyer – Maint Tech 1 – Summer \(PDF, 297 KB\)](#)



Maintenance Tech 1 – Winter

Register for this course bundle to learn the basics for maintenance techs in the industry, including snow removal, anti-icing, weather monitoring, and more.

- [LearnTrack Flyer – Maint Tech 1 – Winter \(PDF, 886 KB\)](#)

Planning for the Future

As the year passes, one thing is certain, the way we model our budget must change to meet today’s demands. In the past, many used a percentage of the entire budget to figure out the increase needed for the upcoming year. In today’s budgeting for road and bridge projects, I find it important that everyone knows what the money is planned for. You will have instances where you overspend or under spend line items, but to not plan to address this is not good business.

Running a road department as a business is essential to being successful. You need to look at every aspect of your highway department and determine where you are successful and where you have challenges. In the leadership class, we talked about two things: 1) what you do well and 2) consider an alternative for the things you don’t do well. Having a bid for contracted labor is not always a bad thing. Often companies that provide a service are very efficient and cost effective. Use those companies to your advantage and don’t be afraid to pay a little more for a better result.

Have a plan that covers every aspect of your department. When we look at a highway plan, you should consider wages and benefits, equipment replacement, bidding requirements and projects that are slated for the years to come. I have been working with multiple organizations on how to best utilize the funding available to them. The biggest thing those paying the bills want to see is where the money is being spent today and what our plan is for spending the funds in the future.

Finally, many of you have heard me make the statement at various meeting: “We never have the time and money to do it right the first time, but we can always find both to do it over”. Today and in the future, the most important tool we can use is the life cycle tool. If poor gravel lasts 3 years and costs \$5, we should consider \$8 gravel that lasts 10 years. Always using the lowest cost doesn’t mean it’s the cheapest!!! This applies to supplies, materials and the way we perform our job.

Greg Vavra (SDTTAP Program Manager)

Please feel free to contact either NTTAP Co-Director, Ron Hall (ronald.hall@ndsu.edu) or Bryon Fuchs (bryon.fuchs@ndsu.edu). Our team of transportation training experts has a wide range of experience and expertise, and we are here to help however we can. We appreciate the opportunity to work with you and look forward to staying connected in the months ahead.